



## **General project questions**

### **What are the SR 167 HOT Lanes?**

The SR 167 high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes are HOV lanes (for carpools of two or more, vanpools and buses) that are also open to solo drivers who choose to pay a toll. Toll rates adjust electronically to ensure that traffic in the HOT lane is free flowing (at least 45 miles per hour 90 percent of the time) even when the regular lanes are congested. The four-year Pilot Project provides toll-free express trips for buses, vanpools, carpools of two or more and motorcycles, while giving solo drivers the option to pay for a faster, more reliable trip when they need it the most.

### **Why SR 167?**

HOT lanes help make better use of available space in the HOV lanes without reducing the level of service enjoyed by carpools and bus riders. SR 167 was selected for the HOT lane pilot project because, unlike most HOV lanes in the region which operate near capacity during peak commute times, the HOV lanes on SR 167 had available space during peak periods. In addition, SR 167 runs north and south, connecting communities between Renton and Tacoma, and provides the Puget Sound region with an alternative route to I-5.

### **What is the purpose of the SR 167 HOT lanes pilot project?**

The purpose of this pilot project is to learn how HOT lanes and other forms of variable tolling could be used in Washington State to make our highways operate more efficiently by moving more people and vehicles, and by reducing congestion.

### **Are there plans to extend the SR 167 HOT lanes?**

It will take legislative authorization to continue operation of the SR 167 HOT lanes after the pilot project ends in May 2012. If WSDOT receives authority to continue using HOT lanes on SR 167, the southbound HOT lane will be extended south to 8<sup>th</sup> St E. If authority is not granted, an HOV lane will be built instead. This project is scheduled to be advertised for construction in 2012 and completed in December 2014.

## **Toll Cost**

### **How much does a solo driver pay to use the SR 167 HOT lanes?**

The price for a solo driver to enter the HOT lane changes throughout the day based on real time traffic. SR 167 HOT lane toll rates increase when traffic is heavy and decrease when traffic is light. Variable tolls ensure that traffic always moves smoothly in the HOT lanes at speeds of at least 45 mph 90 percent of the time. The average toll is between \$0.75 and \$1.00.

### **How much revenue is generated from SR 167 HOT lane tolls?**

The HOT lanes generated about \$420,360 in gross revenue from May 1, 2009 through April 30, 2010—a 33% increase over the previous year.

- From May 2009 through October 2009, the system generated \$32,130 per month on average.

- From November 2009 through April 2010 that average monthly revenue increased to \$37,930.

## **How does WSDOT use toll revenue generated from the HOT lanes?**

All toll revenue collected from the SR 167 HOT lanes is used to maintain and operate SR 167.

## **Does the toll revenue collected from the SR 167 HOT lanes cover the costs to maintain and operate the HOT lanes?**

Revenues are increasing as more solo drivers pay a toll to use the SR 167 HOT lanes. Our latest information shows that SR 167 HOT lanes revenue has increased dramatically in the last three months. WSDOT expects operating costs to decrease based on opening a new Customer Service Center to support all current and future Washington State tolling facilities in early 2011, in addition to targeted use of Incident Response Vehicles and Washington State Patrol enforcement activities.

When the pilot project was established, revenues were not anticipated to cover the costs initially. The purpose of the project was to use available lane space to ease overall congestion, and help WSDOT learn how to operate a HOT lane system that could also cover operating costs.

## **How have the HOT lanes performed since opening?**

- More than 60,000 *Good To Go!* customers have paid to use SR 167 HOT lanes since they opened in May 2008.
- Peak-hour HOT lanes traffic volumes have increased by 12 percent, yet speeds have remained at, or slightly above, the posted 60 mph speed limit.
- The average number of daily tolled trips continues to increase - in April 2010 there were an average of 2,150 tolled trips up from 1,710 in April 2009.

## **How have drivers benefited?**

- Since opening HOT lanes in May 2008, northbound morning peak period and southbound afternoon peak period traffic is moving more cars and people efficiently.
  - Northbound morning peak general purpose traffic volumes remained constant, but speeds increased by 3 percent.
  - Northbound HOT lane traffic volumes increased by 25 percent, but travel speeds have remained at the speed limit of 60 mph.
  - Southbound afternoon peak general purpose traffic volumes increased by 5%, but speeds have increased by 19 percent.
  - Southbound HOT lane traffic volumes remained constant with speeds remaining at the speed limit of 60 mph.

## **What do SR 167 HOT lane users think?**

In a July 2010 random sample phone survey of SR 167 users without *Good To Go!* accounts and an on-line survey of *Good To Go!* account holders:

- Nearly 75% of drivers with *Good To Go!* accounts and more than 60% of all other SR 167 drivers think it's a good idea to allow single drivers to use the carpool (HOV) lanes by paying a toll.
- Almost 60% of all SR 167 drivers think HOT lanes should be opened on other freeways in our region.
- More than 66% of carpoolers reported being satisfied with their travel time and do not think HOT lanes slow down transit and carpools.
- More than 70% of all SR 167 users think the signage for the HOT lanes is easy to understand.
- More than 60% of SR 167 users with *Good To Go!* accounts, and almost half of all other SR 167 drivers, think that tolls should be used to manage traffic.

## Operations

### How do I use the SR 167 HOT lanes?

HOT lanes are easy to use: the tolls are electronically debited from the driver's pre-paid account using a payment system called *Good To Go!* – there are no toll booths. *Good To Go!* utilizes a small radio-frequency pass (or transponder), about the size of a credit card that adheres to the inside of a vehicle's windshield near the rearview mirror and can be read by a sensor mounted over the roadway.

When a vehicle first enters the HOT lane, the sensor reads the transponder, and the system automatically debits the toll from the driver's prepaid *Good To Go!* account. Even though vehicles may pass through several access points, a single toll is charged for each trip in the SR 167 HOT lanes. Each solo driver pays the toll price displayed on an electronic sign over the roadway when they first enter the HOT lane. Even if the toll price increases or decreases before the vehicle exits the HOT lane, the driver pays the toll amount that was displayed upon first entering the HOT lane.

### How do I establish a *Good To Go!* account?

- online at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/GoodToGo](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/GoodToGo),
- by phone by calling customer service (1-866-936-8246), or
- in person at the [Gig Harbor](#) Customer Service Center.

### Do I have to have a *Good To Go!* account to use the SR 167 HOT lane?

No, not if you are in a carpool of two or more people or driving a motorcycle. However, if you are a solo driver and want to use the HOT lane, you will need a *Good To Go!* account and transponder.

### What if I am in a carpool? How do I prevent a charge to my *Good to Go!* account?

When carpooling, you will need to shield the transponder so you are not charged the toll. *Good To Go!* shields are available for customers who carpool on SR 167. Shields attach to the windshield using Velcro, and center over the Pass on the interior of the windshield to prevent a toll transaction. Shields cost \$3.23 each (sales tax not included) and can be purchased by:

- [Accessing your online account](#) and purchasing via the web
  - Calling customer service (1-866-936-8246).
  - [Emailing customer service](#)
  - Walking in to the [Gig Harbor](#) Customer Service Center.
  - Mail (P.O. Box 5050 Gig Harbor, WA 98335), or by fax (253-853-4235)
- More information is available at:
- [View transponder shield installation instructions online](#)
  - [View shield installation instructions \(pdf\)](#)

### Can I use my *Good to Go!* transponder on other tolled facilities?

Yes, your *Good to Go!* transponder can be used on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and to cross the SR 520 bridge when tolling begins in the Spring of 2011. The SR 520 and Tacoma Narrows bridges will offer video tolling, which doesn't require a transponder. At this date, to use the SR 167 HOT lanes, solo drivers must install the *Good To Go!* transponder in their vehicle.

## **What are the hours of operation?**

The SR 167 HOT lanes operate between 5 a.m and 7 p.m seven days a week. During night-time hours (7 p.m. to 5 a.m.) the HOT lanes are open to all drivers. No transponders are necessary and no tolls are charged.

## **Are motorcycles with a *Good To Go!* transponder charged a toll in the HOT lane?**

No. Motorcyclists may still use the HOT Lane toll free. Motorcyclists with *Good To Go!* do not need to shield the transponder. The system is able to filter out transponder reads for motorcycles.

## **Can commercial vehicles and vehicles with trailers use the HOT lane?**

- Trucks which weighing [more than 10,000 pounds](#) gross vehicle weight may not use HOV or HOT lanes.
- Vehicles pulling a trailer (when the total weight of both vehicles is more than 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight, or when the combo is unable to keep up with the flow of traffic in the HOV lane) are also prohibited.

## **Why are transponder readers over both the HOT lane and the general purpose lanes?**

There are two sets of transponder readers installed at each tolling location along SR 167 in the HOT lane corridor. The two sets of readers enable the system to pinpoint the exact lane location of a transponder. So, vehicles with transponders traveling outside the HOT lane are not mistakenly tolled, and tolls post to accounts only for customers in the HOT Lane.

## **What are the rules for using the SR 167 HOT lanes?**

### ***General Signs***

Signs are posted along the entire 10 mile HOT lanes corridor between Renton and Auburn indicating that the far left lane is a HOT lane and is open only to carpools of two people or more, vanpools, transit, motorcycles and solo drivers who pay the electronic toll.

### ***Approaching Access Zone Signs***

Signs are posted about one-half mile before every HOT lane access zone telling drivers that they are approaching an access point. There are six access zones in the northbound lanes and four access zones in the southbound lanes.

### ***Access Zone Entrance Signs***

An electronic sign is posted at the beginning of each access zone indicating the current toll price. The system calculates a new toll rate every five minutes. As you approach an access zone, you'll notice this electronic sign that can change at any time. Signs are posted to allow solo drivers sufficient time to decide if they want to pay the toll and enter the HOT lane.

The entrance sign will show a toll amount based on the level of traffic in the HOT lane. If traffic in the HOT lane becomes too congested, the sign will switch to "HOV ONLY," indicating that the lane is closed to all solo drivers, including those with transponders.

During night-time hours when HOT lanes are not operating (7 p.m. to 5 a.m.), the sign will read OPEN TO ALL. No transponders are necessary to use the lane.

When there's an emergency that blocks the HOT lane, the sign will switch to "CLOSED," indicating that the lane is closed to all traffic. All vehicles in the HOT lane must exit at the next access zone.

### ***No Crossing Double White Line Signs***

This sign reminds drivers that it is illegal to cross the solid double white line that separates the HOT lanes from the two general purpose lanes. Access in and out of the HOT lanes is restricted to access zones, which are marked by signs and a single dashed line. Breaking this law could mean fines of \$124 or more.

### **What is WSDOT doing to improve SR 167 operations?**

The 2010 Washington State Legislature directed WSDOT to study ways to make the SR 167 HOT lanes safer and easier to understand. WSDOT has acted by:

- Increasing public outreach and education efforts
- Improving signage and access locations
- Monitoring and reporting the HOT lanes' performance
- Enacting cost-saving measures and systems

### **Since HOT lanes were implemented, are more people carpooling?**

There has not been enough reliable data collected to assess whether HOT lanes are increasing the number of people who choose to carpool in the corridor. WSDOT is conducting a study now that provides more information about carpools throughout the SR 167 system. The study report from will be complete in late 2010.

## **Enforcement**

### **How are HOT lanes enforced?**

The Washington State Patrol provides enforcement for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project. The fine for illegally driving in a HOT lane or crossing the solid double-white lines is \$124. Drivers may report HOT lanes violators [online](#) or by calling 1-877-764-HERO.

## **Comparing HOT lanes across the nation**

### **Has this been tried anywhere else? Was it successful?**

HOT lane systems are growing in popularity across the nation. Miami, Denver, Minneapolis, San Diego, Orange County, Salt Lake City and Houston all currently employ toll lanes to help ease congestion and collect revenue for future projects. Orange County's SR 91, for example, started as a 10 mile HOT lane system that voters approved to extend an addition 10 more miles into Riverside County.

### **What are the plans to expand HOT lanes beyond the existing 10 miles on SR 167?**

In 2009, the Washington State Legislature directed WSDOT to prepare a traffic and revenue study for the Eastside Corridor, which includes parts of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties, stretching approximately 50 miles down I-405 and SE 167 from Lynnwood to Puyallup. If authorized, WSDOT could provide up to two express toll lanes on I-405 that connect to the lanes already established on SR 167. The study's Executive Advisory Group recommended moving forward with a 40+ mile express toll lane system from the King/Pierce County line to Lynnwood along I-405. To move forward with this strategy, WSDOT needs to secure legislative authorization and federal approval.